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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

IN

AMERICA

A LECTURE

BY

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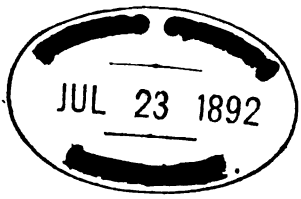

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THIS LECTURE
EMBODIES THE SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES DELIVERED
IN MANY PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES
DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS.
TO THE
BENEFACTORS AND FRIENDS OF
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSISY OF AMERICA
IT IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN AMERICA

BRETHREN: Your hearts are filled with joy to-day because years of faithful and generous labor have at last been crowned by the dedication of this beautiful church* to the service of Almighty God. But in your joy I am sure you do not lose sight of the fact that during those years of endeavor and of hope our dear Lord and His adoring flock found welcome and fitting shelter in the hall of the parish school-house. Your prudent and zealous pastor, knowing well that "the child is father of the man," and that the way to make a parish of good Christians is to see to the Christian training of the children, erected the school-house before laying a stone of the church; he invited Our Lord and the people of the parish to be for awhile the guests of the children; and it is only after having for years blessed with His Real Presence that home of Christian education that our Divine Saviour has come to occupy this His beautiful dwelling place.

Friends, is not this an object-lesson of the relation between religion and education? It is putting in concrete and symbolic form the lesson so frequently inculcated by the word of God, that Our Lord is "the Light of the World," that He is "the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," that "God is Light and there is no darkness in Him," that Christians must be "children of the light."

It is the will of God that neither ignorance nor stupidity nor error shall rule His people, but the knowledge of the truth, which, He says, is to "make us free," breaking the fetters of ignorance, dispelling the illusions of error, developing and setting free all the powers which our Creator has bestowed on the human intelligence for His creatures' good. And before the opened eye of our intelligence God puts the book of nature, the book of humanity, and the book of rev-

*St. Elizabeth's Church, Chicago, dedicated June 19, 1892.

elation, that from all three we may drink in such measure as we can of the fulness of the truth, for our own welfare, and for our Heavenly Father's glory. Thus, in the nature of things, education and religion are inseparable.

Again, yonder school-house stands not in a desert solitude, as if the light imparted in it was only for the purposes of prayerful contemplation, only for the uses of the other world and not of this. Far from it. The school-house is planted on one of the thoroughfares of this busy city, to show that its training is meant not only for the other life, but also for this present life with all its myriad duties; not only for heaven, but also for earth with all its burdens and cares and toil; not only for God, but also for our fellow-men and all the multifarious relations which link human society together. Again, therefore, this is an object-lesson concerning the intimate relation between education and civilization. Men may differ in their definitions of civilization, but all must recognize that its essential conditions and its chief constituents are the intellectual development and the moral development of the people. Without intellectual development there is childhood of the race; whereas civilization is manhood or advance towards it. Without moral development there is no beauty nor symmetry nor soundness in their condition, whereas civilization implies all these. And since education means intellectual and moral development, we see that education and civilization are also inseparable.

This natural and inseparable relationship between religion and civilization, on the one hand, and education on the other, has in all ages been clearly understood by mankind. History shows that, among all civilized races, the prevalent notions concerning religion and civilization determined the character of the education given to the young, and that, on the other hand, the kind of education imparted was the chief agency in maintaining the national type of civilization and moral character. It is of the greatest importance that we should rightly grasp this lesson of history. A just appreciation of existing conditions and of the measures they demand can best be attained through a right understanding of the conditions which existed in preceding ages, the measures they called for, and the results which they led to. The lesson is

written so plainly on the pages of history that a very brief glance will suffice to show us its meaning and its moral.

In the ages preceding Christianity, religion and civilization were universally dominated by one great idea and characteristic—that of absolute and exclusive nationalism. Civilization then meant the fitness of men for the duties of citizenship and for promoting the welfare of the nation. Religion was a department of national life; worship was a function of the State, and its ministers were State officials. Accordingly, education was a preparation for duty as citizen and soldier. In Sparta the child belonged to the State and was raised by the State from its birth. The child that was unfit for the duties of citizen and soldier was considered to have no right to live and was put to death. Children that gave promise of future usefulness were brought up by State officials in common barracks and received only such training as would fit them for the work which the State was to demand from them.

Athens had a broader notion of the purposes of life and the meaning of civilization. But Athens, too, held as a fundamental principle that the purpose and end of the individual was the State. From the age of seven years the child's training was conducted by the State, and even the great Plato taught that a child not fit to serve the State had no right to live.

Rome inherited the theories of Sparta and Athens; and while in the successive stages of her civilization we can discern at first the stern drill of the former and then the more liberal culture of the latter, still Rome held throughout to the idea dominant in both—that civilization means fitness for the duties of citizenship, and that education must have this for its almost exclusive aim.

Thence followed two great consequences, which may be regarded as the chief characteristics of the ancient civilizations. The first was the heathen estimate of man. The individual was absorbed in the State, was considered to exist only for the State, had worth or dignity only through his relation with the State. The Roman citizen could everywhere boast of the dignity that invested him; but it was not the dignity of personal worth, but of the great empire to which

he belonged. This estimate of man's nature and end is the real foundation of the heathen civilizations.

The second consequence was that education was restricted to the governing classes only. They alone had the rights of citizenship, and education was only to fit for citizenship. All other classes of the community had only to obey the governing classes and to work for them. They were held as serfs or slaves. Education was withheld from them, because, it was said, it would be useless to them, nay, it would even be dangerous to the State, since education would naturally inspire them with higher aspirations. Thus the great mass of the people were systematically cut off from education and kept in ignorance, as shown by the fact that in the palmy days of Athens the citizens are said to have numbered 20,000 and the serfs who toiled for them 400,000. If here and there we remark that slaves were used by their masters as school teachers or even produced literary works of note, these were only rare and singular exceptions, serving but to prove the rule. And the rule was that human worth was made identical with citizenship, and that the ideal of politics and education among the ancients was a handful of strong and cultured men ruling a world of ignorant beings, who live only for their masters' aggrandizement and who are ready even to slay one another for their masters' pastime.

Against this shocking system, the only noteworthy efforts at reaction were that of the Sophists and that of Socrates.

The Sophists leaped to the opposite extreme, and instead of absolute nationalism taught absolute individualism. Their ideal was a world of individuals absolutely independent of one another, each living according to the light of his own notions or the prompting of his own caprices. Its logical outcome was Epicureanism, whose tendency was, as Horace said, to turn men into "swine of Epicurus' pig-sty." The remedy was worse than the disease.

Socrates rose in honest protest against both these extremes. His fundamental ideas were the immortality of the soul and moral accountability to God. These two great truths he taught with all the earnestness of his noble soul. His teaching was a condemnation of both the systems then in vogue. On the one hand it put to shame the flippancy of the Sophists

and the moral corruption which their theories fostered. On the other hand it was an assertion of the worth and the rights, as well as the duties of every human being, which was quite inconsistent with the all-absorbing nationalism of what was then considered the civilized world. We know the result. Athens commanded him to desist from his teachings; and because he could not in conscience desist from saying the truth, he was put to death. His noble teachings may, alas! be said to have died with him. Even his great disciples, Plato and Aristole, failed to grasp the full import of his ideas or to lead them to the conclusions which he evidently had in mind.

And so there was left no hope for heathen civilization. It was founded on a wrong idea of man; it ignored what truly constitutes the worth and dignity of humanity; it logically aimed at making human life absolutely intolerable to the great bulk of mankind; it made education a mere instrument for the perpetuation of this false system, and used religion to uphold it by her temporal and eternal sanctions. Any attempt at protest or reform was treason. Hence the old system had in itself no power for its own cure. For the good of mankind it necessarily had to pass utterly away, to be supplanted by a system totally different in its principles and its aims. That system was Christianity.

Our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth His Church to electrify the world and to startle the old Cæsarism by proclaiming the dignity and the inalienable rights of every human being—dignity and rights based, not on the power and glory of empire, but on the immortality of the individual soul and its relation to the Infinite and Eternal God. The proclamation was a battle-cry; and heathen Rome tried to deal with Christianity as Athens had dealt with Socrates. The Roman Empire, the empire of the then known world, was the battlefield on which the contest was fought out for three centuries. Christianity prevailed at last, not through force of arms, for arms she wielded not, but by the power of truth, against which all weapons of violence are in vain. She prevailed, and the great colossus of pagan might crumbled to pieces at her feet. It was a contest and a victory for all ages and all nations. It was the dawn of a new civilization, the civilization of Christendom.

Christian civilization gave a new direction to social ideas and civil polity. Its initial idea is the worth, the dignity, the welfare and destiny of the individual. Its fundamental principle is that right is superior to might—that might exists only for the assertion and defence of right. It is no longer the individual that belongs to the State, but the State—yes, and the Church, too—belongs to the individual. "All things are yours," writes St. Paul to the Christians of his day, "all things are yours, whether it be Paul or Apollo or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Rulers are taught that they hold power, not for their own aggrandizement, but for the good of the people; that the only legitimate end of government is the welfare of the governed. They are reminded, moreover, that the humblest human being has rights which are absolutely inalienable, because bestowed by his Creator, rights which the State did not give and which the State dare not violate or ignore. Plato taught the State that it might slay any child that did not give promise of civil usefulness; Christ teaches that to slay that child would be murder, and that the mightiest empire on earth dare not do it. Thus the individualism of Jesus Christ was substituted for the nationalism, the Cæsarism of old.

But the individualism taught by Christ was totally different from the individualism taught by the Sophists. She did not, like them, put a gulf between the man and the citizen. She did not aim at disintegrating humanity into individual atoms without social links and obligations. On the contrary, she taught that every individual is born into society, is meant by the Creator to be a social being, is by his very nature a member of civil society, and is bound to become by regeneration a member also of the spiritual society of Jesus Christ.

Thus Christianity avoided both of the one-sided extremes into which the old schools of philosophy and civilization fell. Its teaching was marked by that well-balanced symmetry which is the characteristic of truth and which alone can insure a lasting civilization. It not only told man of his heaven-bestowed rights; it also reminded him of his heaven-imposed duties thence resulting—duties to himself, duties

to his family, duties to his country, duties to God. Religion showed him the sacred foundations of his rights; she also held ever before him the sacred and awful sanctions which enforced his duties. Education was henceforth to have as its aim to make him appreciate more worthily the moral dignity with which his natural rights invest him, to show him the pathway of upright living in which his character as man and as Christian demands that he should walk, and to give all his faculties the development and the direction which will best fit him for the fufillment of all his duties, both to this world and to the world to come.

In the heathen systems education was usually almost entirely in the hands of the State, because education had no other end in view than the duties of a citizen, duties to this world alone. In the Christian system the State was still to have some influence over education, because Christianity, no less than heathenism, considered the duties of the citizen as of great importance and of bounden obligation; but the paramount influence and control naturally belonged to the family and the Church, because these represented interests and duties of a still more sacred character and a still more imperative and essential obligation. Thus all exclusiveness and one-sidedness is guarded against; thus all sides of human life and every kind of human relationships are taken into account; thus the broad and sure foundations are laid on which religion, civilization, and human welfare in all its forms of domestic felicity and civil prosperity may stand forever.

And now let us consider some consequences which follow immediately from the Christian principles which we have thus far been studying.

In the first place, the fundamental idea of Christian civilization is, as we have seen, the worth and the rights of every human being and the responsibility of governments towards every individual, even the least and humblest, over whom they rule. Now this theory must, in the very nature of things, gradually lead to the elevation of the individual citizen, gradually give him a larger share in the civil polity of his country. And such elevation of the individual citizen must logically lead up, step by step, to popular institutions

and representative governments. That such has been the steady drift and influence of Christian civilization during all the ages of its existence no serious student of history can doubt. It would be easy and interesting, did time permit, to trace the progress from despotism and barbarism to feudalism and chivalry, and from these to the popular and representative institutions of modern times.

Again, let us remark that every step in the elevation of the individual citizen is an appeal to his intelligence; that every advance towards popular institutions is logically an advance towards general enlightenment and popular education. Where one governs, and the many have only to obey, the many can feel no great need of intellectual enlightenment. If they know enough to perform well their daily toil and to save their souls at last, this is apt to be considered quite sufficient for them. But in proportion as all become active factors in the social organism and are brought into competition for the first places in the race of life, each one is spurred to acquire for himself and to procure for his children all he can of that intelligence and enlightenment which best secure preeminence. From social conditions of that sort the school develops as a matter of course. It is not at home but in the school that youth must receive the instruction which such a social state demands. Home must supply them with food, clothing and shelter, and every rightly managed home ought to suffice to supply these without any co-operation on the part of others. But not every home, though ever so well managed, can suffice to supply the education which such social conditions require. Education is, by its nature, a matter of co-operation. The school is the natural outgrowth of a community which appreciates the demands of advancing civilization. And the character of the instruction given in the school will, of course, largely depend on the condition and needs and aspirations, both spiritual and temporal, of the community.

Here we have, as it were in germ, the whole philosophy and history of Christian civilization and Christian education. During the first four centuries and more, while the civilization and culture of heathen Rome still prevailed, Christian schools arose in all the great centres of learning, equal in every re-

spect to the philosophic schools around them, and Christian sages were ready and able to maintain the truth against the subtleties of the ablest writers who assailed it. When barbarism had overflowed the continent with devastation, and every monument of civilization was submerged beneath the awful flood, and the dark ages began, then the Church carried her blessed light everywhere amid the darkness, shedding abroad both the moral and the intellectual influences which were to dispel the dense gloom of ignorance, to establish over the fierce barbarians the reign of the Prince of Peace, to build up Christendom.

Simple indeed was the store of learning, whether sacred or profane, which the wild tribesmen were able or willing to receive. The Church gave them what they could take. And when the chaotic confusion of barbarism was brought into some shape and order by feudalism, still the social conditions were so simple and rude that the Christian schools had, as a rule, but little to do beyond teaching the artless flock their duties towards God, and the merest rudiments of secular knowledge made needful by the elementary domestic and civic duties incumbent upon them. In proportion as social conditions improve we behold an increasing expansion of intellectual aspiration and activity. Then in the legislative assemblies, in which the Bishops and the nobles, the representatives of the Church and of the State, sat and voted side by side, we find educational matters receive more and more attention, and we see a Charlemagne and an Alfred vieing with the pontiffs and pastors of the Church in erecting and supporting schools and laying the foundations of the great universities which were to become the glory of Christendom.

Thus by slow but sure degrees Christianity was to work out in human society its grand and beneficent ideal. It found society in its childhood, the rude, impetuous, uncultured, and dependent childhood of barbarism. Through the influence of the ideas and spirit of Jesus Christ it was to lead society up to its enlightened, cultured, strong and self-governing manhood. Perhaps we may be tempted to wonder that the process has been so slow, and that even now the result, as a whole, has been so imperfectly attained. But should such a question occur to our minds, we have only to glance at the facts of the case in order to find a clear and sufficient answer.

In the first place, we behold this tendency of Christianity met and resisted, century after century, by a counter tendency to absolutism, to Cæsarism, on the part of rulers and governments. This was the spirit of the old Roman civilization; it was equally the character of the barbarian chieftians; and from both these sources it was transmitted to the princes and kings and emperors of later times. They have left the record of their proud, despotic self-assertion on every page of history since the beginning of Christendom. As a matter of course, they could only regard with aversion and hostility Christianity's declaration of the inalienable rights of individuals and of the people. Often in the course of history it has seemed as if Cæsarism would prevail and roll the world back into absolutism. Many an interesting chapter in the history of the emperors of Germany and the kings of France has just this for its meaning. And many a thrilling story of the resistance opposed to their assumptions by the Chief Pastors of the Church, meant simply the assertion of the inalienable rights of that civil and religious liberty which Christ had brought into the world, against the grasping Cæsarism that would fain ignore those rights or trample on them or use them as its tools.

Again, we have only to glance at a map of Europe in order to recognize a second hindrance which has constantly resisted the advance of true Christian civilization. We see the surface of the continent cut up by a multitude of boundary lines. These boundary lines not only mark, as at first, the division of clans and tribes and peoples; they have unfortunately come to indicate the separations of national rivalries, jealousies, and enmities. Century after century we behold the nations of Europe arrayed in armed hostility. This has necessitated military rule, and therefore tended to perpetuate Cæsarism. National narrowness, moreover, intensifies the clinging to old traditional ways and notions, and thus co-operates with Cæsarism in resisting the advance of ideas and the improvement of institutions; in a word, in opposing the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Against these two great hindrances Christian civilization was making its way as best it could, when a third obstacle was raised by the disastrous results of the great religious rev-

olution which broke forth in the midst of Christendom three centuries ago. It divided Christians into conflicting and ever-multiplying sects. It arrayed creed against creed and church against church. To national animosities it added religious animosities still deeper and more bitter. It taught men, alas! to hate one another for the love of God, to persecute and kill one another for the sake of the Prince of Peace! It not only set individuals against individuals and communities against communities, but plunged nations into disastrous wars. In a word, it resisted the unity and the universal brotherhood inculcated by Christ Our Lord, and put new and weighty obstacles in the way of the true reign of Christian civilization.

When we consider the power and the obstinacy of these three great hindrances, we may well cease to marvel that the advance of the spirit and aim of Christianity has been so slow. No wonder that human progress has so frequently had to make its way through violent upheavals, which usually leave much to deplore as well as something to be thankful for.

Such, then, was the condition of Christendom when Divine Providence opened up America as a refuge for humanity from all forms of oppression, as a fresh field for the development of Christian civilization, as a new world free from all the entanglements and hindrances which had so impeded Christianity in the old world.

Here in our own country, which Providence had destined to be pre-eminently the land of liberty, there lay open to the world a territory as large as the whole of Europe, with none of those national boundary lines which turned Europe into a vast camp of jealous rivals or open foes. Here men who had been enemies in the old world, because belonging to different nations, could meet as fellow-men, as brothers, and blend into one great people, fit symbol of the universal brotherhood of men.

Together with the curse of nationalism, Providence banished from our country the scourge of Cæsarism; and our Declaration of Independence based the rights of the man and the citizen, not on the gift of the State or the favor of Cæsar, but on the bestowal and ordinance of the Creator.

With these two great hindrances to Christian civilization, the third obstacle, sectarian animosity, was likewise banished from our country by the God of Nations. It was but natural that religious intolerance and resentments should have reigned among the early colonists. Most of them had smarted under religious persecution of one form or another in the old world, and no wonder that they carried the memories and the bitterness of religious strife to their new homes. But the providence of God could not allow such a spirit to reign here. Catholic Maryland was the first to unfurl the banner of religious liberty. Other colonies soon imitated the noble example. During the war of independence Churchman stood shoulder to shoulder with dissenter, and Catholic with Protestant, in equal devotedness to their country's cause. Catholic France and Puritan New England joined hands as they followed Washington to victory. Thus the hand of God broke down the barriers of religious hostility, and showed our people that the un-Christlike spirit of hatred and persecution was to have no home here; that Americans, while not yet united in religious belief, must agree to disagree in friendliness and charity; that while each one is free to follow his conscience fully, yet doctrinal differences must in no way hinder them from forming a thoroughly united and homogeneous people. While the harsh cry of bigotry is, alas! still occasionally heard, yet the voice which the American people above all love to hear is the voice of Him who said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another."

The great hindrances to the full reign of Christian civilization in the old world being thus to so great an extent eliminated by the hand of Providence from our favored country, it was but natural that she should become, not only the grandest organization of popular and representative institutions that history has ever known, but also the nearest approach which the world has yet beheld to the universal brotherhood of men, to their universal equality, to the universal recognition of man's inalienable rights, in a word, to a national system practically based on the social principles of Christian civilization.

No wonder, then, that everyone who loves God and loves humanity should also love America. No wonder that from

every corner of the earth the fettered and down-trodden of other climes flock to her with eagerness, or stretch out their arms to her with wistful yearning. ' No wonder that they who have elsewhere borne the galling yoke of oppression, or whose forefathers have smarted under its lash, should here rival and even surpass America's free-born sons in devotedness to the country of their adoption. No wonder that the old Church of Christ, whose only object is the glory of God and the welfare of humanity, and which has had and has to-day so much to suffer from persecution in other lands, should give thanks to God for this land of liberty, in which the rights of God and the rights of man blend so harmoniously together.

And now, from the principles whose practical application we have been studying, it logically follows that as America exhibits the fullest development of popular institutions which the world has ever beheld, so she must also be the field of the greatest activity for popular education. And so in fact she is. Without the slightest intention of disparaging the zeal for education now manifested in other countries, it can with truth be said that there is no country in the world in which such efforts are made for the education of all classes of the people. That it should be so is the natural outcome of the principle of universal suffrage. This universal right to take part in the life of the nation, this universal right to aspire to her highest honors and privileges, is naturally a spur to every individual citizen to fit himself for the best that he is capable of attaining to. And, on the other hand, the fact that such is the right of every citizen forces the nation to see that the people are provided with all the intellectual advantages which they desire and demand. Nay, the national interests demand it as much as the rights of the citizens do, for a country of univeral suffrage can less afford than any other country to have ignorant citizens. The people of America ought to be the best educated people in the world.

And this has reference not only to the quantity of education imparted, but also, and still more, to its quality. It must be an education which is adapted to make them not only intelligent men and citizens, but also good men and virtuous citizens. It is a universally received axiom that the

success of a republic must depend on the virtue of its citizens. To secure this end must be the great aim of popular education. The youth of America are born into an inheritance of broader civil rights, and therefore of weightier civil responsibilities than the youth of any other country on earth. In the young life of the American child there lie dormant more capabilities, both for good and for evil to his fellow-men, than are within the reach of the child of any other nation. Hence, the people of America, and, in the last and truest analysis, the parents of America, have a greater responsibility than any others to use all possible means for hindering the development of bad capabilities and fostering the growth of good capabilities in the characters of their children.

In this great work three agencies must co-operate—the influence of home, the influence of the Church, and the influence of the school. It is not necessary to dwell here on the part which home and church must have in the formation of character. No one will think of calling in question the paramount importance of home influences. Nor will any parents, worthy of that sacred relationship, imagine that any amount of care bestowed on their children by other people could possibly dispense them from being the special agents of Divine Providence in the moral moulding of their offspring. Neither will any Christian doubt that children ought from their tenderest years to be brought close to Him who said : "Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If they appreciate what the Church of Christ is to themselves, they will not fail to desire that their children should, as soon as possible, become partakers in its treasures of truth and grace.

The only possibility of doubt among intelligent Christians is about the part which the school ought to have in moulding character as well as in imparting knowledge. Yet no lengthy reasoning is necessary for recognizing that the influence of the school is apt to be the most potent, and therefore the most important of the three.

From the time that children begin to go to school, they spend far more of their waking hours under the care and influence of their teachers than under that of parents or of pastors. During those hours the mind, the heart, the char-

acter of the child are in the teacher's hands. During school hours the child expects to have serious matters presented for his study, and applies himself to them as best he can. When set free from the restraint of the school he considers it his right to have all his time for rest and play, and if then the most serious of all matters be forced upon him, he is apt to rebel and to hate these matters instead of appreciating and loving them. He considers it quite enough that he should be compelled to devote some of his free time to preparing for his classes of the following day. Experience shows that this is almost universally the disposition of children, and that it is scarcely less so in the years of youth than in the years of childhood.

And not only does experience show that it is principally during school time that the young are to be trained to clear and deep and strong convictions; it also proves that the impressions received in school are, as a rule, more potent in forming convictions for life than the impressions of either home or Church. If the teacher succeeds, as all teachers should strive to do, in winning the esteem and confidence of his scholars, they will instinctively come to weigh in his scales all that they hear at home or in church, and the more the school trains them, as it is said, to think for themselves, the stronger does this instinct become. Practically speaking, therefore, the school is the most efficacious agency in the forming of convictions, and it is on convictions that the shaping of conduct and character must mainly depend. Any system of character-moulding which ignores this fact is short-sighted and foolish. Any system of training which does not aim at making the influence of the school as salutary as possible for the character of the scholars, is blind to palpable facts and to good sense, and must expect disastrous results from so serious an omission.

Mr. Gladstone has lately written with solemn significance that the all-important question now pressing, not only on America, but also on the nations of the world, over which America is sure to exercise a growing influence, is "not what manner of producer, but what manner of man the American of the future is to be." To this momentous question we can only answer, this must, in the nature of things, depend

on what kind of schools the American of the future is trained in. The welfare of our country absolutely demands that the youth of America should be trained in schools which will form them not only as producers, but also, and above all, as men. The most important question, therefore, now demanding the attention of the American people is this: How shall the schools of America be best fitted for the moulding of American character?

Answers to this great question will vary chiefly according to each one's estimate of the necessity of the Christian religion for shaping character and regulating life. Should anyone consider the Christian religion not an essential element in character-moulding, then he will logically not be very anxious for its action in the school. He will be content that the moral training of the children should be effected by appealing to their honor, to their sense of propriety, to their respect for the rights of others—in a word, to the principles of natural ethics. Now these are good, as far as they go; but the experience of history has shown that they do not go far enough, that they need for their foundations a sense of duty, of obligation, of right and wrong in conscience and before God; and it has shown that these foundations are laid only by religion—nay, that they are solidly and efficaciously laid by the Christian religion alone. Heathenism had its teaching of ethical principles, but they were powerless, except in extraordinary cases, to control passion and mould character, and they utterly failed to form a sound civilization before the Christian religion entered the world. Just as powerless would they be to preserve it if the influence of the Christian religion were withdrawn. This is a point about which Christians, at any rate, can hardly differ. Nor can they fear that the influence of Our Lord and of His religion in the school-room would depress the children or stunt their energies, or put gloom into their young lives; for well they know that He who is truth and grace is also light and peace and joy, and that it will be well with the children in every way just in proportion as their minds and hearts and lives are shaped under His blessed influence. Hence the question practically resolves itself into this: How can the influence of the Christian religion be best

brought to bear in the schools of America, in order to efficaciously mould the character of American youth?

But in facing the solution of this problem we are at once met by a very grave difficulty in the composite character of the American people. In our sixty-five millions every shade of religious creed and opinion is represented. If, then, the conscience and the rights of all are to be respected, how can any system of Christian schools be possible?

To some the difficulty seems insurmountable. Hence they are willing to accept as the only practicable solution a system of schools from which all religious teaching is excluded, contenting themselves with the hope that the religious influences of home and of the Church will be sufficient. But I hope that the arguments already advanced have made it clear that in the light both of logic and of history this conclusion is untenable. The action of Christian homes and of the Christian Church is indispensable; but without the co-operation of Christian schools they cannot suffice for the Christian moulding of the people. To shape characters and direct lives according to the principles of the Christian religion is no easy task; for it is a religion that is hard on flesh and blood, hard on the instincts and passions of the human heart. If religion does not control these, then its profession is only hypocrisy. And if it is to control them, if it is indeed to shape and direct all the conduct of life towards God, towards self, and towards one's fellow-men, then all the period of character-moulding and all the influences that can co-operate in it will not be found too much. In a word, if we are to have a practically Christian people, then we must have Christian schools, as well as the Christian Church and Christian homes.

A large proportion of the American people now recognize this truth, and are anxiously trying to devise some method for introducing the influences of the Christian religion into the public schools. Various plans have been suggested for devising a system of Christian teaching which would suit all classes of conscience and conviction, some sort of compromise Christianity, a minimized Christianity, containing so little of distinctively Christian dogma that no one could find anything in it to object to. But any such system of com-

promise and of minimizing cannot possibly succeed, and that for various reasons.

Unbelievers will not accept it, for they have shown themselves determined to accept for themselves and their children no Christian teaching whatsoever.

Christian believers cannot accept it, because this minimized Christianity, although made up of some excellent things culled from the Christian religion, can be no substitute for the Christian religion.

People of common sense will say: If you wish that Christianity should be an influence in the schools for your children's good, don't minimize it; the more you minimize it, the more you minimize its influence on their character. Let it be what Christ made it. Christ has given us nothing in it that we do not need, and that the children do not need to be taught and moulded in; then, in the name of consistency, either let Christianity be in the schools just what Christianity is, or make no pretense of introducing it at all.

Let us learn a lesson in regard to the arrangement of religious differences among our people from our method in regard to political differences. People come to our shores from all the nations of the world, from under all forms of government, with all kinds of political convictions and opinions. In this land of liberty we have no desire to tyrannize over any one's political convictions. What, then, do we do? Do we adopt a system of compromise, and minimize our political principles so as to suit all forms of political opinions? Not at all. We assert and uphold our American ideas of civil rights and duties, of governmental prerogatives and limitations, and we minimize them for no one. We trust in their evident truth and the advantages of their practical working; and to those who hold lower ideas we say: "Friends, come up higher." And they do come up, and we rejoice in a united and homogeneous people.

Now, this is as it should be. And will any one say that the method, though true and good as to political ideas, would be false and pernicious as to religious ideas? Let those say it who believe, with Locke, that a thing can be true in philosophy and false in religion, or *vice versa*. No; what is true and good in social philosophy is true and good in relig-

ion. We should neither minimize Christianity nor coerce people to accept it; we should teach it clearly and fully as we understand and believe it, and leave the result to the force of truth. He would have very poor confidence in Christianity who would fear to put it to this test, and he would do injustice to Christianity who would refuse it this much fair play.

But, it will be urged, how could we possibly teach any one form of Christianity clearly and fully in the schools, since our people would naturally differ as to which form of it should be taught? But, I would answer, do the religious differences among our people hinder them from teaching Christianity, as they understand it, clearly and fully in their churches? Would they ever dream of devising a compromise Christianity to be taught in all the churches of the land, so that all the people might go to churches of the same kind? Not at all. Bodies of Christian believers follow their conscience in having different churches, according to their convictions of Christian truth and duty. Nay, if they were capable of sacrificing conscience in regard to their religious convictions by making compromises of them to suit other people, what reliance could be placed on conscientiousness in any other respect, and what foundation would there be left for public trustfulness and prosperity? And if it is so in regard to the churches, and if its being so is to the advantage and not the detriment of the American people, why should it not be the same in regard to the schools, which may be considered to be for the little folk almost what the churches are to the grown people?

But, it will be objected, will not the unity and homogeneity of the American people be thus broken up, or at least seriously imperilled? Not a whit more than by their having separate churches. On the contrary, the surest guarantee of a thorough union of our people in mind and heart is each one's firm assurance that fullest justice is done, and shall be done, to his conscientious convictions, and that he has to make no compromise of them because his neighbor believes differently from himself. Were such compromise attempted it would not change convictions, and these would inevitably assert themselves sooner or later and lead to conflict. But

now each follows his conscience towards God, rejoices that he is free to do it, and therefore loves his country and his fellow-citizens all the more for conscience' sake, for God's sake, and for freedom's sake. How much better this than the clashing, the suspicions, the accusations, the strife, sure to result from the contrary experiment. Has there not already been too much such clashing in regard to the schools? In vain should we seek the remedy in more compromise, in more minimizing. The remedy must be found in fullest fidelity to conscience, and in lovingly "agreeing to disagree." Let us put far from us the delusion that we will train the children to be better citizens by training them to be compromise Christians. It was not in neutral or compromise schools of the sort that Washington and Madison and all our great models in American patriotism were taught. There were no such schools in their day. All schools then aimed at being Christian schools. The neutral or compromise school is the invention of a later and far inferior epoch. Without the influence of Christian schools, in vain will we hope for a return of their spirit of unselfish patriotism.

There is indeed one class of churches and of schools which, while claiming to be Christian, would necessarily exercise a most detrimental influence on the unity of the American people. I mean churches and schools in which the people and the children would be taught religious bigotry and sectarian animosity. There are some such churches, and perhaps some such schools; but, thanks be to God, they do not belong to the Catholic Church. Our teaching is, and shall be, that of devoted and practical love of God, and that of universal love of our fellow-men without limit or exception. Let such be the teaching in all the churches and all the schools; let the contrary spirit be everywhere denounced and eliminated from among our people; and then between all the churches and all the schools there will only be a beautiful and beneficent rivalry as to which shall best teach the purest and fullest Christianity, and the purest and fullest patriotism.

But, it is insisted, would not this logically place all the schools under the exclusive control of the churches, so as to do away with the control of the State? Not at all. No such consequence as the exclusion of the State is involved in this

idea. True, were the State determined that State schools could not be, or should not be, Christian schools, then indeed intelligent and conscientious Christians would be compelled to have for their children Christian schools which would not be State schools. And in the present state of public opinion this is really the existing condition of things; the State schools at present exclude the teaching of the Christian religion, therefore the land is covered with Christian schools, Catholic and non-Catholic, which do not belong to the State, and receive from the State neither aid nor direction. But this is a situation for which there is no necessity in the nature of things. There is no necessary incompatibility whatsoever between the idea of a State school and that of a Christian school. Let the State recognize the plain and palpable and all-important truth that the schools of the country will be all the better for being Christian schools, and that any school which is up to the required level in secular instruction is all the more deserving of State support if it imparts a Christian training also; let it be willing that, without any detriment to the secular teaching, Christian teaching and Christian influences should exercise their blessed action on the children without limitation or hindrance; then there would remain no good reason why every Christian school in the land should not be a State school also. There is no lack of good will, surely, on the part of any of the Christian churches; why need there be on the part of the State? Other nations have found this practicable and advantageous to their people. To suppose that America would find it either impracticable or undesirable would be to judge very meanly either of her ingenuity or of her Christianity. We have no desire to see any foreign system transplanted here, but we trust that American good sense recognizes that it is well to learn wisdom even from the experience of one's neighbors.

But, it is again objected, even were this arrangement possible in case the State had only one or two denominations to deal with, is it not evidently impracticable where there might be a multitude of varying sects asking for the same recognition? By no means. This would indeed be true if the State had to take the various forms of religion into account and

superintend the religious side of the work done in the schools. But such would evidently not be the case. The State pays for and superintends the work done in teaching the ordinary school branches, with which alone the State is concerned, and without the slightest reference to the religion which the teacher might profess, or which he would teach to the children whose parents desired it, for with this the State has nothing to do. And thus, whether the religious denominations represented by the parents of the children in the various schools numbered two or three or two hundred would be a matter of no concern whatever to the State, since it is only the secular side of the instruction that the State is concerned with and would take note of.

But, it is still urged, why should any denomination be so sweeping in its expectations as to ask that its religion should have full sway in a school supported by the State? Has not the Catholic Church decided that religious instruction after school hours suffices, and ought not that to satisfy all claimants? It is true that the Holy See has decided that such an arrangement may be made where no better can be done for the children, and where the State will allow them no fuller and freer exercise of their religion. And in so deciding, the Church has again, as on innumerable previous occasions in history, shown the conciliatory spirit that animates her, shown how earnestly she desires that Church and State, though distinct and independent in their respective spheres, should co-operate harmoniously for the moral welfare of mankind, and how ready she is to adapt herself to circumstances, to make concessions and compromises when necessary, provided only that they involve no sacrifice of principle. But why need the State deal with religion in so ungenerous a spirit? Why should a nation of sensible people wish to limit and diminish to the utmost the beneficent influence of religion over the children? What good reason can the State possibly have for refusing them the fullest and freest exercise and influence of their religion? Does the State suppose that the children will be better American citizens for being influenced as little as possible by their religion? The idea is preposterous; such cannot be the mind of the American people. The State knows that the rising generation will need all the moral

and religious influences which they are capable of receiving in order to be the kind of citizens they ought to be. Does America suppose it would be to her discredit in the eyes of the civilized world if she gave more liberty than that to religion in the schools? Far from it; she knows that the civilized world, now so anxiously asking, in the words of Gladstone, "What manner of man is the American of the future to be?" will bless America for bringing Christian influences to bear on the children of the land as fully as possible. Does she imagine that any denomination would thus gain power for the country's harm? Cursed be any denomination that could be capable of such treacherous ingratitude! The thought is simply monstrous. Only a mind blinded by fanaticism could harbor such a suspicion. The Catholic Church, at any rate, has so repeatedly and so unmistakably declared, by the mouths of her Bishops and even of the Pope himself, her admiration for America, for her principles and her institutions, that of her, at least, the suspicion cannot be with any shadow of reason entertained. Or does the State fear that injustice would be done to the conscience of any child or of its parents? But when the children in a particular school are all of one denomination, and sufficient provision is made in other schools for children of different religious convictions, no such injustice is to be apprehended. Or does the State fear that, if full freedom were given to religion in the schools, the time would be so taken up with religious instruction that secular instruction would suffer thereby? But this would be to mistake entirely the character of the constant influence which religion would fain exercise over the minds and hearts of the children. This influence does not consist in long and frequent doctrinal instructions. Such a system as that would only disgust and weary the children and thwart its own purpose. It consists principally in the gentle and almost imperceptible influence constantly exerted by the religious character of the teachers, by the nature of their answers to the questions the children ask, by the explanations and observations which they would naturally introduce wherever the study in hand has a moral aspect, by the tact with which a conscientious and skillful teacher will avail himself of the thousand opportunities occurring all through the day to imprint im-

pressions of truth and duty and virtue on the susceptible young minds and hearts which Providence has entrusted to his care. Such a system as this detracts not in the least from the fulness and excellence of the secular instruction imparted, but breathes into it the living soul which makes it truly an education for the citizen and for the Christian. Why, then, should the State wish to hinder this, to banish these elevating and beneficent influences from the children or to minimize their humanizing and christianizing action. Where the State is thus minded and the support of a better system is found impracticable, then those children and their parents may perhaps be considered fortunate in having a half loaf, or even a very small crust, rather than no bread. But why should the State ever be thus minded? Let the State do full justice to herself and to her citizens by doing full justice to Christianity in the schools.

That America will one day do this we cannot for a moment doubt. We have the fullest confidence in the fulfillment of her Providential mission as a great Christian power in the world's future. We have fullest confidence in the good sense of the American people, and in their love of fair play. Therefore we cannot but feel certain that America will yet make sure the foundations of her Christian civilization by providing for the youth of the land a system of Christian education. For that day we pray and we wait in patient hope.

Meantime the duty of Christian parents, who love their children and their country as they ought, is manifest. They are bound to procure for their children, by their own exertions and with their own means, that greatest of all earthly blessings, the priceless boon of an education which, while thoroughly sound and thoroughly American, will also be thoroughly Christian. To this they are called by the voice of the Church, whose councils have repeatedly and emphatically declared that the spread of Christian education is the great work of the age, and that no parish is complete without a Christian school. To this they are called by the voice of nature, by the heaven-imposed obligations of parental duty and parental affection. Let them win their children's everlasting gratitude by giving them that best of all inheritances, an education fully fitting them for all their career, for all

their duties to time and to eternity. To this they are likewise called by the voice of patriotism. For a while their country may misunderstand their action and misjudge their motives. This we profoundly regret, but it cannot deter us from doing our duty. We will push on in our glorious work, on towards the noble aim of placing the advantages of an excellent Christian education within the reach of every Catholic child in the land. And the day will surely come when, all prejudices and misunderstandings being dispelled, our country will do us justice, and recognize that we have indeed been her best friends.

Brethren, the only sure foundation of both the Christian Church and the Christian State is Christian education. In God's name, let us redouble our energies, and make that foundation broad and solid and everlasting.

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